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INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUEHZJ/HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS
RUEHSW/AMEMBASSY BERN 0073
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0085
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
RUESDM/JTLO MIAMI FL
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HAVANA 000318

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STATE DEPT FOR WHA/CCA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/30/2017

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [SOCI](#) [CU](#)

SUBJECT: ANOTHER CUBAN GROUP, ANC, SEEKS PRISONERS' RELEASE

REF: A. HAVANA 313

[1](#)B. HAVANA 311

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Classified By: COM Michael E. Parmly for Reason 1.4(d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Seventeen Cuban pro-democracy activists affiliated with the National Constitutionalist Alliance (ANC) gathered in Havana on March 29 and called for the release of political prisoners. State Security did not interfere with the meeting. ANC leader Angel Pablo Polanco told reporters that the organization has launched a campaign aimed at winning the prisoners' freedom, and that of Cuba, by the end of 2008. The campaign involves a signature drive and the threat of "street mobilizations," in the event that the prisoners are not released. The campaign was announced two days after the "Ladies in White" -- backed by a host of other activists -- wrote to the UN Human Rights Council, strongly urging that body to demand that the Cuban Government release its prisoners of conscience. The ANC lacks the stature and support to mobilize major street protests, but its call joins a chorus of demands for the prisoners' release, and pressure is building on the regime to respond. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) A federation of Cuban pro-democracy organizations, the National Constitutionalist Alliance (ANC), called March 29 for the release of political prisoners. The call came in a press conference at the home of ANC leader Angel Pablo Polanco, who addressed not only members of Havana's foreign press corps but, via conference call, reporters in Miami. Polanco and 16 other ANC-affiliated activists, including "Ladies in White" Berta Soler and Alejandrina Garcia, as well as youth leader Nestor Rodriguez Lobaina, announced the start of a campaign aimed at winning the "unconditional release of all Cuban political prisoners, and the liberation of Cuba, before the end of 2008." Organizers of the campaign say they hope to collect 250,000 signatures for a free-the-prisoners petition that will be "submitted to the international court at The Hague, and the International Criminal Court." The ANC also states that if the prisoners remain behind bars at the end of 2008, the group will call on citizens to occupy public squares and demand the prisoners' release.

NO GOC INTERVENTION

[1](#)3. (C) State Security, based blocks away at the notorious

Villa Marista detention/interrogation center, did not interrupt the dissident event. Among the participants were members of the ANC (or Polanco's other organization, the Pro-Change Committee) from as far away as Granma, Guantnamo and Holguin provinces. A number of foreign missions were invited to observe, but only USINT appeared. Three foreign reporters, one from AP, attended the press conference at the Havana end. (Radio and TV Marti reporters were among those covering the event in Miami, at the office of Council for the Liberation of Cuba.)

REPORTERS SKEPTICAL

14. (C) At least one reporter in Havana was skeptical about the ANC's goal of collecting a quarter-million signatures and, if needed, putting large numbers of people on the streets. Polanco, associated with conservative elements of Cuba's exile community, responded by saying that although State Security controls society and instills fear, there is a great desire for change and, particularly among the youth, willingness to try to make a difference.

MORATINOS VISIT

15. (C) Reporters also asked Polanco if he hoped to meet with Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos during the latter's April 1-3 visit to Havana (reftel A). Polanco noted that the Spanish Embassy had declined to send a participant to the press conference. He added: "My opinion is that Spain is not truly offering the support we need. The Spanish Government has never invited us to hear about its policy toward Cuba. We respect everyone, but we won't go looking for support from Spain, given its policy. And anyway, our struggle is internal."

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APPEAL BY "LADIES IN WHITE"

16. (C) The ANC event came two days after the "Ladies in White," relatives of the 75 peaceful activists imprisoned in 2003 after sham trials, sent the Human Rights Council a note (reftel B) imploring the body to demand that the Cuban Government immediately free all prisoners of conscience. The note was supported by 14 key Cuban pro-democracy groups, including the ANC; Vladimiro Roca's All United; Martha Beatriz Roque's Assembly to Promote Civil Society; Roberto de Miranda's Independent Teachers College; the Marti Youth Coalition; the Christian Labor Union; labor federation CONIC; Manuel Cuesta Morua's Progressive Arc; the Liberal Party; the Independent Library Project; the Cuban Liberal Movement; and a freedom-of-expression group. Other groups, such as Oswaldo Paya's Christian Liberation Movement and Juan Carlos Gonzalez Leyva's Cuban Human Rights Foundation, said they would release statements in support of the Ladies' appeal.

COMMENT

17. (C) Although the ANC lacks the stature and support to mobilize large street protests of its own, the group's call joins and strengthens a chorus of on-island calls - including those by the Ladies in White and by Paya's MCL - for the immediate release of political prisoners. The rising volume of this collective voice is undoubtedly increasing pressure on the regime, which we hope will be put on the spot to release prisoners in connection with Moratinos' visit.

PARMLY